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ABSTRACT

Single teenage parents and expectant parents in four community-based programs were provided with information about establishing the paternity of their children. The information presented included the benefits, obligations and consequences of paternity establishment for the mother, father, child and society. The goal was to educate single teenagers about paternity establishment and to enable them to make informed decisions. An additional goal was to increase paternity establishment rates for children of single teenage parents served through the project. Educational presentations included individual and group discussions and classroom presentations supplemented with easy-to-read booklets and a video presentation. Those interested in following through with paternity establishment were provided with practical assistance in completing forms, obtaining notary public services and filing appropriate documents with the Clerk of the Superior Court. Professionals interacting with single teenage parents were also educated about paternity issues and provided with information and resources. Goals for the establishment of paternity were met. Goals for educating single teenage parents were not met due to the high number of participants who did not complete the Project Assessment. Although educational efforts with teenagers and professionals were generally successful, paternity establishment is a complex issue and many more questions were raised than answered. (Contains 75 references. Sever appendices provide the survey instrument, evaluation and consent forms, list of materials, and a presentation outline.) (Author)

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ED 386 635

Every Child Deserves Two Parents: Establishing Paternity for Children of Single Teenage Mothers

by

Janet M. Wise

Cluster 52

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum was submitted by Janet M. Wise under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Nov. 24, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

June S. Delano, Ph.D., Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Every Child Deserves Two Parents: Establishing Paternity for Children of Single Teenage Parents. Wise, Janet M., 1994. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Paternity, Fatherhood, Single Teenage Parents, Child Support, Welfare Reform, Absent Parents, Family Decline.

Single teenage parents and expectant parents in four community-based programs were provided with information about establishing the paternity of their children. The information presented included the benefits, obligations and consequences of paternity establishment for the mother, father, child and society. The goal was to educate single teenagers about paternity establishment and to enable them to make informed decisions. An additional goal was to increase paternity establishment rates for children of single teenage parents served through the project.

Educational presentations included individual and group discussions and classroom presentations supplemented with easy-to-read booklets and a video presentation. Those interested in following through with paternity establishment were provided with practical assistance in completing forms, obtaining notary public services and filing appropriate documents with the Clerk of the Superior Court. Professionals interacting with single teenage parents were also educated about paternity issues and provided with information and resources.

Goals for the establishment of paternity were met. Goals for educating single teenage parents were not met due to the high number of participants who did not complete the Project Assessment. Although educational efforts with teenagers and professionals were generally successful, paternity establishment is a complex issue and many more questions were raised than answered.

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November 21, 1994
date

Janet M. Wise
signature

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The setting for this practicum included two prenatal care programs for pregnant teenagers operated within county health departments, one community-based case management program for pregnant and parenting teens and one comprehensive school-based program serving the same population. These programs were located in a southwestern state that shares a border with Mexico. One of the prenatal care programs and the community-based case management program were located in a large, urban area of the state and the other prenatal care program and the school-based program were located in a small city in the southwest corner of the state. This city is in close proximity to the international border.

In 1991, the population of the state was 3,763,372 and the county containing the urban area had 2,180,575 inhabitants. The population of the county in which the small city is located was 110,750 (Gersten & Mrela, 1993) and can be regarded as essentially rural. Population figures for the counties are provided because all programs included in this practicum served clients countywide.

According to 1990 census figures, about 72 percent of the residents of the state were white/nonhispanic and the remainder (28 percent) was composed of

various minority groups. The child population of the state in 1990 was 60 percent white, 27 percent Hispanic, 8 percent Indian, 4 percent Black and 2 percent other (Morrison Institute, 1992). This state is typical of the Southwest in that it has a substantial and rapidly growing Hispanic population but relatively small numbers of other minority groups.

The county health department prenatal care programs differed somewhat from the other programs included in this practicum. They were part of a statewide effort, centrally funded and administered through the State Department of Health Services, designed to ensure that pregnant teens receive adequate prenatal care as well as medical services for labor and delivery. They accepted clients through age 18 and closed their cases within 60 days after the baby's birth. These programs employed case managers who provided community outreach, intake and assessment, health plan eligibility assistance and the development and monitoring of individualized case plans. Payment for prenatal care, labor, delivery and brief follow-up care was provided by the program if the client was not eligible for a subsidized medical plan and had no other resources. Since services terminated rather quickly after delivery, the programs also provided referrals to other services for teenage parents and assisted clients in accessing community resources.

The urban prenatal care program (Urban A) had the capacity to serve 400 clients per year and had 206 open cases at the close of 1993. As of June 1994, it employed one program manager and three full-time case managers (P. Baird, personal communication, June 8, 1994). The rural prenatal care program (Rural A) served 185 clients in fiscal year 1993 and in January, 1994 had 120 open cases. It

employed one coordinator/case manager and five nurses each of whom devoted between 10 and 20 hours per week to the program (D. Johnson, personal communication, January 10, 1994).

The community-based case management program for pregnant and parenting teens (Urban B) was a new component of a well-known nonprofit agency that provided a variety of child care related services to the state's two urban areas. This program served pregnant and parenting youth through age 21 and had no automatic point at which services were terminated. It emphasized health education, parenting skills, educational continuation/completion, personal development, life skills and career/vocational readiness. It also featured a mentoring component through which a volunteer was matched with a client to provide emotional support, role modeling and other assistance as needed. This program was designed to serve up to 50 clients over an 18-month period. It employed one full-time case manager, one part-time mentor coordinator and had 16 open cases at the end of 1993 (A. Thompson, November 15, 1993).

The comprehensive school-based program (Rural B) was located on a high school campus in the small city within the rural county. This program was originally part of a project initiated with funding from a foundation. It emphasized high school retention and completion and provided a wide range of supportive services including special classes in parenting and infant/child development, infant day care, access to prenatal and well-baby care, academic and employment counseling and case management. Students enrolled attended regular academic classes in the high school and received instruction in prenatal self-care, parenting

skills, child development and career planning in a special building devoted to the pregnant and parenting teen program. They were permitted to remain in the program as long as they were within the age limits established for high school attendance. The program served 110 students during the 1992-93 school year and had 50 students enrolled as of January, 1994. It employed a program director, classroom teacher, nurse/case manager, secretary, child care manager and four child care aides. All staff were full-time employees (C. Roberts, personal communication, January 10, 1994).

These programs, though differing in certain respects, shared many common elements. They all served pregnant and/or parenting young people exclusively and they all included the fathers of the babies (or other partners of the mothers) in those services that were appropriate to them. All were concerned with nutrition, early and regular prenatal care, health education, family planning and parenting skills. In addition, the managers of these programs all confirmed the infrequency of paternity establishment and the absence of knowledge about the benefits, obligations and the procedure for its completion. All managers acknowledged the need for an educational effort in this area and enthusiastically agreed to participate in it.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's role in these programs for pregnant and parenting teens was that of an unpaid consultant. The program directors and some of the case managers were professional colleagues of the writer and many belonged to the same

organizations such as the statewide council on school-age parenting. The writer often worked with these individuals in various settings and capacities since 1991.

These sites were selected for the implementation of the practicum because they enabled the writer to engage in a project that strongly related to the content of her work and supported the goals of the grant that funded her position. Involvement in programs providing direct services to pregnant and parenting teens gave the writer the opportunity to make a genuine contribution to the knowledge base in an area of newly recognized but urgent concern. It also provided the chance to make a substantive, positive change in the lives of young parents who were enrolled in the project.

The writer was employed as adolescent specialist in a small governmental office that performed no direct services. The staff of this office included a director, six professionals and four support staff. Professional staff operated independently with limited intraoffice interaction. Issues addressed were varied but all related to children and youth. Examples include juvenile justice and other adolescent issues, child welfare (abuse, neglect, foster care), early childhood and school-age concerns, and legislation related to children and youth. In these areas, professional staff provided leadership, consultation, information and advocacy.

The adolescent specialist's position was supported by Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds whose primary emphasis was the development of self-sufficiency among pregnant and parenting teens. In service of this grant, the writer's responsibilities included the collection, production and distribution of information to expand awareness of issues surrounding teenage pregnancy and

parenting. Another important function of the job was to develop programs for teen parents focusing on employment and self-sufficiency, to contract with community agencies to deliver the services and to monitor the programs funded.

Other duties involved the coordination of two statewide task forces, production of various publications, public speaking and other community outreach efforts, constituent assistance and involvement in various child protection and foster care issues. Remaining abreast of legislative initiatives in the above areas and establishing a position regarded proposed legislation was another job responsibility.

Before assuming this position in 1991, the writer was employed by the state child protection agency for seven years, serving in both case management and policy and program development capacities. Also certified as a teacher, the writer taught in elementary, junior high and community college settings prior to joining the child welfare agency in 1984.

The Director of the writer's agency was informed about the nature of the practicum and agreed that it was consistent with the writer's ongoing job responsibilities and the mission of the JTPA grant. She provided strong encouragement for the writer to pursue paternity establishment among single teenage parents as a doctoral project.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

> Until we begin with the premise that every child has a right to a legal relationship with his or her father, and that guaranteeing that right should be the rule rather than the exception, millions of children will continue to be deprived of the benefits such a relationship can bring. (Nichols-Casebolt, 1988, p. 253)

The question of whether to establish the paternity of their children is just one of many problems faced by unmarried teenage mothers but it is one that has drawn increased attention, both nationally and locally, among elected officials, policy-makers and public agencies. For most single teen mothers, beset by a constellation of daily, practical difficulties, this must seem a cruel irony: Nobody cared much so long as the numbers of single parents were relatively small, welfare expenditures on their behalf were manageable and the public outcry was muted. Public agencies did not rush in hot pursuit of absent fathers (they still don't), nor did they exert extraordinary efforts to collect child support for single mothers. Economics drives policy, as it always has and probably always will.

The motivation behind recent attention to the issue does not negate its significance, however. Single teenage mothers in ever increasing numbers have been swelling the welfare roles and the consequences of their long-term economic

disadvantage will be experienced by society for decades to come. Because many of the problems associated with teenage parenting such as poor health, poverty, educational limitation, unemployment and welfare dependency are exacerbated by being and remaining single, the ramifications of single teenage motherhood with little paternal presence or responsibility are staggering.

This constellation of problems rests on a complex set of circumstances that have developed in the United States during this century and have become particularly evident since 1960. These developments must be understood to fully appreciate the nature and extent of the problem.

Increasing rates of pregnancy and childbearing among American teenagers have recently commanded considerable attention. These increases, however serious their import, must be viewed in a historical context. Although teenage birthrates have risen, both nationally and in the writer's state since the mid-1980s (Morrison Institute, 1992; Mrela, 1993b, 1994b), they are still well below the rates of the 1950s and the 1960s (Children's Defense Fund, 1993a). The most striking change that has occurred is in the proportion of new mothers who are unmarried (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 1991; Vera Institute of Justice, 1990)). While this trend has been seen among mothers of all ages (Children's Defense Fund, 1993a; Wattenberg, 1987), it has been especially pronounced among teen mothers (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1993; Howe, 1993; Smollar & Ooms, 1987; Vera Institute of Justice, 1990). According to the Children's Defense Fund (1993a), about 15 percent of teenage mothers were unmarried in 1960 as contrasted with almost 68 percent in 1990. In the writer's state, both the number and percentage of

single teens giving birth have increased every year since 1989 (Gersten & Mrela, 1990; Mrela, 1993b) and in 1993, an alarming 78.3 percent of all teen mothers were single (Mrela, 1994b). In fact, during the five-year period between 1989 and 1993, the number of single teenage mothers in the state increased by 24 percent.

Figure 1

STATE TRENDS IN OUT-OF WEDLOCK BIRTHS

TEENAGERS (10-19) 1989 - 1993

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Number of Single Teen Mothers	6,578	7,030	7,534	7,915	8,169
Percent of Total Teen Births	70.2%	72%	74.5%	76.7%	78.3%

The question arises, then, what has caused the dramatic increase in single parenting? Why are so many women of all ages choosing to bear children out-of-wedlock, to remain single and why are so many marriages ending in divorce? Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991) addressed this issue in *Divided Families* and concluded that social and economic changes occurring over many decades have had profound effects upon the American marriage system. Sex role distinctions have

become less pronounced and women, in general, are better able to support themselves. As a consequence, they are less willing to tolerate marriages that do not provide the ingredients that Americans regard as essential: romantic love and emotional satisfaction. "The entrance of women into the labor force is at the core of a constellation of changes in the American family that has caused both men and women to rethink marriage." (p. 5)

It is an inescapable paradox that the rise of economic independence among American women has contributed to the formation of an underclass within which unmarried teenage mothers are among the most disadvantaged. Single teenage motherhood is a problem for many reasons but one of the most important is its strong and enduring association with poverty. This relationship has been thoroughly documented (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1993; Children's Defense Fund, 1992; Dryfoos, 1990; Hayes, 1987; Savage, 1987; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1990) and though cause and effect have been hotly debated (Furstenberg, 1991; Geronimus, 1992; Geronimus & Korenman, 1993), the relationship is increasingly regarded as circular. That is, each factor seems to operate as a cause and also as a consequence of the other (Vera Institute of Justice, 1990). And it is not surprising that a parallel relationship has been documented between early, single fatherhood and poverty. "Economic disadvantage leads to a high risk of involvement in unintended pregnancies, early fatherhood and absent fatherhood." (Vera Institute of Justice, 1990, p. 8)

Of course, most of the children remain with their mothers and the poverty experienced by these single parent families is compounded by the fact that few

receive child support from the fathers. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, " The lack of financial contribution from an absent parent, generally the father, is the most significant cause of child poverty." (1991, p. 5) Whether or not absent fathers have the ability to pay is a question to be addressed later. It is clear that regardless of ability, most unmarried fathers have not shared equally in the support of their children and most of the poor can be found among families headed by single mothers (Children's Defense Fund, 1993b; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1992).

Until paternity has been established for nonmarital children, however, efforts to enforce paternal responsibility and collect child support from absent fathers cannot even be initiated (Ooms & Owen, 1990; Savage, 1987; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1992). Through the process of paternity establishment, fatherhood is legally confirmed (Slayton, 1993) and it is an essential first step in the process of ensuring support for children and encouraging shared responsibility among parents of both sexes (Garfinkel, 1992). When out-of-wedlock births represented a small fraction of total births, paternity establishment was not a priority. With 29.5 percent of all births (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1994) and 68 percent of teenage births now taking place outside of marriage, it has become a critical issue that cannot be ignored. Since 1975, the responsibility for establishing paternities for nonmarital children has rested with the Child Support Enforcement (IV-D) agencies (Nichols-Casebolt & Garfinkel, 1991).

Another development occurring during the past three decades that is integrally related to the rise of single parenting and its resulting economic hardship

is the decline of the nuclear family. Although some scholars still assert that the family is not declining but merely experiencing change, Popenoe (1993) and the National Commission on Children (1991) argued that family units have become smaller, stay together shorter periods of time, have less power, authority and command less respect. Over many centuries various functions of the family have been taken over by other institutions (work, education and care of extended family members provide examples), leaving the twentieth century American family with just two adults and two basic roles: child rearing and affection/companionship. Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991) agreed and tied the changes to the rising economic independence of women. The demise of this family is now in progress, stated Popenoe, with serious consequences for everyone, but especially for children.

The changes that have taken place in the past 30 years reveal a dark picture with an uncertain conclusion: Two-parent nuclear families are becoming a thing of the past, families headed by single mothers are increasing and a high percentage of these are poor, especially those involving teenagers. The vast majority of these families receive no child support, few single mothers establish paternity and many have little ongoing connection with the fathers. For many reasons that are both causes and consequences of the conditions detailed above, fathers are becoming dispensable. For those who believe, like Popenoe (1993), that the family is the best place to raise children and that fathers play an essential role in the family unit, efforts to intervene in the vicious cycle are not wasted. Thus, the problem addressed by this practicum was: Most single teenage parents do not establish the paternity of their children.

Problem Documentation

The National Perspective

Although national estimates of the proportion of nonmarital births in which paternity is established varied considerably, none was particularly high. It was not possible to locate a source that documented more than a 33 percent national average and many estimated that paternity establishment occurs in about one-fifth to one-fourth of all nonmarital births (Lerman & Ooms, 1993; Ooms & Owen, 1990; Nichols-Casebolt & Garfinkel, 1991; Savage, 1987; U.S.D.H.H.S, 1990, 1994). The Child Support Enforcement Agency's *Seventeenth Annual Report to Congress* (1994) indicates that in 1992 there were 3.1 million children requiring paternity establishment. This figure is deceptively low, however, as it represents only those children whose parent (typically the mother) has applied for welfare or approached the agency for help in establishing paternity or obtaining child support. Children born out-of-wedlock whose parents do not fit in these categories were not counted.

It should be noted that recent years have witnessed improvements in paternity establishment ratios, probably resulting from legislation requiring child support enforcement agencies to address this issue, incentives provided to them for doing so and increasing public concern over welfare expenditures for single mothers (Nichols-Casebolt, 1988). Despite these positive developments, paternity has not been established for the vast majority of nonmarital children and that even in those states that have the best records, there is still room for improvement.

Nichols-Casebolt and Garfinkel (1991) stated that reliable statistics on the ratio of paternities established to nonmarital births have only been available since 1979 when states began consistent reporting to the Child Support Enforcement Agencies. The most recent data they presented revealed a national average ratio of .279 in 1986. This ratio reflected a nine percentage point increase from the initial ratio of .19 registered in 1979. These authors also presented data to substantiate considerable variation from state to state as well as from year to year. The states that were most successful in establishing paternities were doing so in about 40 - 60 percent of their cases and those that performed least effectively had paternity ratios of less than 10 percent.

One implication of these rather striking variations among paternity establishment ratios is that improvement is not only possible but likely. Indeed, data presented in the Child Support Enforcement Agency's *Sixteenth Annual Report to Congress* (U.S.D.H.H.S., 1992), revealed that most states were meeting the paternity establishment performance standards mandated by the Family Support Act of 1988. These standards established a paternity baseline for each state based on its 1988 ratio and required states to meet one of the following criteria:

- Maintain a paternity establishment ratio equal to the national average.
- Maintain an average ratio of .50.
- Improve at least 3 percentage points per year over their 1988 paternity baseline.

In summary, the literature documented considerable variation among the states in their ability to establish paternities for nonmarital children. It also

demonstrated that efforts to increase effectiveness have been showing positive results. Nevertheless, paternity has not been established for approximately 70 percent of all children born out-of-wedlock in any one year.

A Statewide Overview

Unfortunately, the writer's state is among those in which the paternity establishment rate has been particularly low, according to Nichols-Casebolt and Garfinkel (1991). Its paternity baseline ratio, set in 1988, was one the lowest at .16 (U.S.D.H.H.S., 1992). While this situation reflects negatively upon the Child Support Enforcement Agency, it must also be seen within the context of the state's demographics. Traditionally, the state has had one of the nation's highest rates of teenage childbearing, ranking seventh highest in 1990, according to the Children's Defense Fund (1993a), and third in 1991 as documented by Child Trends (1994). Its rate of nonmarital childbearing for mothers of all ages (37.8 percent in 1993) is also considerably above the national average of 28 percent (Mrela, 1993b). Among teenage mothers, the state's rate for nonmarital births of 78.3 percent far exceeds the national average of 68 percent cited by the Children's Defense Fund (1993a).

As the entity responsible for establishing paternities, the Division of Child Support Enforcement has been faced with many challenges, however, it has not discharged them effectively. In 1991, this agency ranked dead last behind all states, the District of Columbia and three territories in its child support collections per dollar of administrative costs (U.S.D.H.H.S., 1992). Another report, (Roberts, 1991), ranked the state 45th in the overall effectiveness of its services.

This dismal record received extensive media coverage, drew the governor's attention in 1993 and resulted in a legislative attempt to restructure the agency. Although the legislation failed, numerous internal changes were made and the agency has recently claimed substantial improvement. Nevertheless, the *Seventeenth Annual Report to Congress*, providing data for 1992, once again placed the state at the very bottom in the cost effectiveness of its programs (U.S.D.H.H.S., 1994). Finally, a recent report from the Children's Defense Fund (Ebb, 1994) ranked the state 51st in the percent of cases for which paternities were established in 1992 and claimed that only 12.8 paternities were established in that year for every 100 out-of-wedlock births that occurred in the state in 1991.

In an attempt to uncover the other side of this story, the writer interviewed the supervisor of one of the two paternity establishment units within the Division of Child Support Enforcement on August 2, 1993 and again on December 13, 1993. These discussions revealed an agency with stressed-out, underpaid workers laboring under the burden of constantly increasing caseloads. In August, 1993, the agency had 87,000 unresolved paternity cases with 600 - 1000 new cases opening every month. By December, 1993, the number of unresolved cases had risen to 106,000 and still the new cases continued to role in (S. Tunks, Personal Communication, December 13, 1993). Although its performance has not been acceptable, this beleaguered agency has certainly not had an easy task.

The Local Setting

To gather evidence substantiating the problem in the local setting, the writer interviewed nine teen parents, the program manager of the county health

department's prenatal care program and a number of attendees at a December, 1993 conference that highlighted the issue of paternity.

Among nine single teen parents interviewed, only one stated that she had established the paternity of her child and none was receiving child support. Although these teen parents were both bright and motivated, it is doubtful that any fully grasped the meaning of "paternity establishment." Most were receiving or had applied for welfare but only one out of nine recalled being asked for information about the father by the eligibility worker and signing an agreement to cooperate with paternity establishment. This procedure is supposed to be mandatory for all unwed mothers when they apply for public assistance.

The manager of the prenatal care program stated that the vast majority of teenage parents served by her program have not established the paternity of their children. Among 82 cases closed in this program as of August, 1993, 48 had the father's name placed on the birth certificate. Among these, the program manager estimated that fewer than 10 actually followed through with filing the appropriate papers in the Superior Court (P. Baird, personal communication, August 5, 1993). The program manager believed that many teenagers confuse the process of having the father's name placed on the birth certificate with paternity establishment and do not understand that they are two distinct procedures.

Experience gained during the implementation of this practicum corroborated the existence of this widespread confusion and revealed its source. Many hospitals present a form entitled "Affidavit of Acknowledgement of Paternity," to unmarried parents for the purpose of placing the father's name on the birth certificate. See

Figure 2. The name of the form has undoubtedly caused misunderstanding and it appears that most hospital workers who are responsible for discussing it with new parents, gathering and notarizing signatures on the form do not understand that its completion does not result in the legal establishment of paternity.

Figure 2

Follow Instructions on Back of this Form

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES - OFFICE OF VITAL RECORDS - P.O. BOX 3887 - PHOENIX, AZ 85030

AFFIDAVIT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PATERNITY

PART I.

I, _____ (NATURAL FATHER'S NAME) and _____ (NATURAL MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME) being duly sworn, declare that _____ (NATURAL FATHER'S NAME) is the father of _____ (CHILD'S NAME AT BIRTH) born on _____ (DATE OF BIRTH) at _____ (CITY AND STATE).

We were not married to each other nor was the mother married to anyone else at the time of birth or any time in the 10 months preceding said birth.

We further declare this statement to be made for recording with the Office of Vital Records and hereby consent and request that the birth certificate be amended to show the father's name and to show the child's name as

FIRST	MIDDLE	LAST

NOTE: **Consider carefully the Full Name you designate for the child. Once the certificate has been changed and registered, future name changes are by court order only.**

FATHER'S SIGNATURE _____

STATE OF _____

MOTHER'S SIGNATURE _____

COUNTY OF _____

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 19_____

by ☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Both Parents

NOTARY'S SIGNATURE _____ TITLE _____

My authority to administer oaths expires _____ ADDRESS _____

MUST BE NOTARIZED – Use black ink only

PART II. PERSONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FATHER FOR CERTIFICATE

FATHER'S FULL NAME _____ Race _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ PLACE OF BIRTH _____

EDUCATION (enter highest grade completed) - Elementary _____ (0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8) High School _____ (1,2,3,4) College _____ (1,2,3,4,5+)

ADHS/ADW Office of Vital Records 101 (Rev 8/98) (48) - IPS 48

(This information must be given as of the time of the birth and not as of the present time.)

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In December, 1993, the local council on school-age parenting sponsored a conference on parenting teens and paternity issues. Conference attendees included counselors, social workers, nurses, community outreach workers and others working with pregnant and parenting teens. At this event, the writer discussed the subject with professionals who have daily contact with teenagers and who routinely provide them with guidance. These discussions substantiated that paternity establishments are rare indeed among teenage parents and documented the need for information and education in this area. The most startling discovery was the complete absence of accurate information on the part of the adults attending the conference. It is no wonder that teenagers do not establish paternity; among the adults they trust and see regularly, there were almost none who knew any more about establishing paternity than the teens themselves.

Causative Analysis

As detailed above, a complex set of circumstances has contributed to the prevalence of single parenting with its many associated difficulties. For single teenage mothers, problems are exaggerated because of the typical teen's immaturity, educational limitations, economic inadequacy and lack of resources.

The decline of the manufacturing economy and its abundance of high-paying, blue collar jobs has made it increasingly difficult for teenagers, whether single or married, to establish new families and care for them adequately. As the

educational requirements for good jobs in our technological society have risen, the gap between those who qualify and those who do not has widened. Young people pursuing the education needed to prosper experience prolonged economic dependency and thus delay childbearing (Testa, 1992). Single teenage mothers, poor, undereducated, with few resources and young children to support, are usually found among the underclass and their chances of remaining there are great.

Why, then, haven't more teenage parents established the paternity of their children and assisted the child support enforcement agencies in their attempts to collect support from the fathers? Again, the reasons are varied and complex.

In keeping with their developmental immaturity, teenage mothers do not understand the responsibilities of parenthood. They often have idealized notions of what parenthood is like with little appreciation of the harsh realities. They may discount the need for two parents due to their lack of experience. Because single teenage mothers tend to repeat patterns established in their own families of origin, their knowledge of functional two-parent families may be limited or nonexistent.

Another cause for the dearth of paternity establishments is the absence of information on the part of single teenage mothers. Not only do they fail to understand the benefits of establishing paternity but, even if they did, they do not know how to follow through and complete the procedure. As previously explained, they may assume they have completed the process when they have not. To compound the problem, the adults working in programs for teen mothers seldom know any more about paternity issues and procedures than the teens do.

Ignorance also contributes to avoidance of paternity on the part of the

fathers, whether or not they are teenagers themselves. Many unmarried fathers would agree to voluntarily acknowledge paternity if they understood that it is a relatively simple process with no court appearances, adversarial hearings or blood testing necessary. Some fathers, who might otherwise remain involved, leave because they fear arrest.

But other teenage mothers and the fathers of the babies have quite different reasons for not establishing paternity. Sometimes the relationship that created the child has ended and the mothers want no ongoing connection with the father. In other situations, the mother's family may discourage paternal involvement so as to maintain complete control over the child. It is also possible that the father himself may influence his partner not to pursue paternity in exchange for promises to remain with her and/or provide informal support to the child.

Finally, economics plays a pivotal role, as always. Economic disadvantage decreases the chances of paternity establishment among unmarried teenage parents of both sexes. Single teenage mothers may not establish paternity because they see it as connected to child support and their poor, unemployed partners have little ability to pay. The fathers, in turn, may avoid paternity because they know they cannot be financially responsible. This reason reflects ignorance of the many benefits flowing from paternity establishment in addition to monetary support.

Overwhelmingly, the causative factors involved in the lack of paternity establishments among single teenage mothers and their partners are related to ignorance, to attitudes and values or to the economic disadvantage of the parties involved. Sometimes it is a combination of all three.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Legislative Background

> Historically, establishing paternity has been treated as a "stepchild" of the child support enforcement system. While major public sector energies were expended on the admittedly important tasks of setting support obligations and collecting those obligations, equivalent attention – until quite recently -- has not been afforded the equally vital task of establishing a legal liability for child support for children born outside of marriage. (Nichols-Casebolt, 1991, p. 83)

Although public interest in paternity-related issues is rather recent and serious concern has only developed within the past few years, the legal mandates that paternity be established for welfare-dependent children of unmarried parents have been in place since 1967. In that year, legislation was enacted requiring welfare agencies to initiate paternity actions, but apparently it was not very effective (Nichols-Casebolt, 1991). At that time as in the present, the motivation for such legislation was to collect child support from absent fathers in order to reduce public expenditures for welfare.

As the numbers of divorced and never-married mothers grew, the need for a separate program to handle child support matters became evident, and in 1974 Section IV-D was added to the Social Security Act (Public Law 93-647). This legislation created the child support enforcement program (also known as IV-D) which is operated by the states but financed, for the most part, by the Federal Government. The responsibilities of this program include locating absent parents, establishing paternity for nonmarital children, and establishing and enforcing

support obligations (U.S.D.H.H.S., 1990). Amendments to Section IV-D, enacted in 1984 (Public Law 98-378), required states to allow paternity actions to be initiated any time until a child reaches age 18. Another provision of this law was to extend the services of the child support agencies (including paternity establishment) to all children rather than limiting them to families who were receiving welfare (Kastner, 1988).

The Family Support Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-485) contained important additions to paternity-related legislation. Performance standards for paternity establishment were set for IV-D agencies and the federal reimbursement for genetic testing was increased. The Act also encouraged states to develop simple civil procedures for voluntary acknowledgement of paternity (Nichols-Casebolt, 1991).

Encouragement alone, however, did not produce the desired results. While paternity establishment rates have improved since 1988, particularly in those states that have developed innovative approaches, they have continued to represent a small portion of the total nonmarital births, as we have seen. Thus, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-66), required states to implement simple procedures for voluntary establishment of paternity and to develop hospital-based paternity establishment programs.

Single Teens and Paternity Issues

The varied causes of infrequent paternity establishment among single teenagers are well documented in a growing body of literature. It has already been documented that the major impetus for concern is the dramatic increase in

nonmarital births and the probability that these young unmarried mothers will be economically disadvantaged and dependent upon public assistance. Indeed, these increases in the writer's state have been so striking that Gersten and Mrela (1990) reported that of all maternal characteristics assessed during the decade of the 1980s, the greatest change observed was in the number of unwed mothers which increased 64 percent. Needless to say, these increases have not abated during the early nineties and have been particularly noteworthy among teenagers (Gersten & Mrela, 1993; Mrela, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1994b).

The relationship between single parenthood and poverty has also been documented. Lerman and Ooms (1993) indicated that about 75 percent of all unmarried mothers are currently receiving some form of welfare benefits. When contrasted with other states, the writer's has more single parents with children under 18 (Single Parents, 1992) and the majority of these single parents are poor. In the writer's urban county in 1990, 51 percent of all families with children under five headed by a single mother were living in poverty (Data Network for Human Services, 1993). Rural portions of the state have experienced even greater levels of poverty than the urban areas, according to the Morrison Institute (1992).

The likelihood of being poor is greater for single teen parents than for older mothers. According to Bustos, "Teen-age mothers experience more poverty and economic distress than older mothers due to low levels of education and high levels of unemployment." (1988, p. 4) Many other sources reported similar findings (Center for Population Options, 1992; Hayes, 1987; Savage, 1987; U.S.D.H.H.S., 1990; Vera Institute of Justice, 1990).

Economic explanations for increased nonmarital childbearing, proposed by Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991) and Testa (1992) were examined in earlier sections of this chapter. Other sources elaborated upon this same theme. Johnson and Sum stated: "Radical economic shifts have made it more and more difficult, and in many cases impossible, for young workers to support families." (1987, p. 3) The National Commission on Children (1991), Savage (1987), the Vera Institute of Justice (1990) and Wilson (1987) reiterated this idea while Furstenberg (1988) summarized it succinctly in saying that young men are less able to support families and women are less willing to marry men who are poor economic risks.

Other causes, however, contribute to the current epidemic of single parenting including changes in values and culture and increased sexual activity among teenagers (Allen & Pittman, 1986; Vera Institute of Justice, 1990; Vinovskis, 1988). Vinovskis and Murray (1993) stated that the availability of welfare benefits encourages single mothers to give birth. Changes in laws resulting in equal legal treatment of nonmarital children were cited by Lerman and Ooms (1993) and Nichols-Casebolt (1988), while greater social acceptance of single parenting was mentioned by Wattenberg (1993). Certainly the popularity of television programs such as Murphy Brown and the vilification of Dan Quayle after he criticized the example it appeared to be setting corroborate the veracity of this explanation.

With the increased incidence of single teenage childbearing and its well documented connections with poverty and disadvantage has come a recognition that paternity must be established for nonmarital children. Despite the growing

awareness that these children almost surely will face economic adversity, paternity establishments are infrequent. This is especially evident in the writer's state but is also true nationally. Various causes for this problem were explored in the literature.

Wattenberg (1987, 1990, 1993), Ooms and Herendeen (1990) and Ooms and Owen (1990) investigated this problem in depth and cited the following factors:

- Sufficient, reliable information concerning the rights and obligations of legal paternity has not usually been available to unmarried parents, especially teenagers.
- The legal rights of young fathers have not always been protected.
- Agency procedures and personnel have been viewed as punitive, coercive and intimidating.

Wattenberg (1987), citing an exploratory study that investigated paternity decision-making, stated that such decisions are extremely complicated and influenced by the views of parents, grandparents, significant others and sometimes the entire community. The competing interests of those involved have often completely obscured the reality that paternity establishment is almost always in the best interests of the child.

Other sources corroborated the absence of accurate and understandable information about the benefits and consequences of paternity establishment as well as the steps that must be taken to complete the process (Roberts, 1991). Ooms and Herendeen (1990) and Wattenberg (1987) noted that even community professionals who might be expected to understand and emphasize the importance of paternity, (social workers, counselors, nurses and other health care workers, for example)

have rarely had the necessary information and have not treated paternity establishment as a priority. This view was strongly confirmed by the writer's own discussions and interactions with community professionals concerning their knowledge of paternity establishment and their actual experiences with it.

Also, substantive barriers to paternity establishment were found within the entities responsible for its accomplishment: the Child Support Enforcement Agencies. Because incentives are provided to these agencies for child support collections, they have had little motivation to pursue paternity cases as they take longer, cost more and result in fewer collections. As Lerman and Ooms stated, "Collecting child support from unwed fathers is not easy." (1993, p. 36) Thus, despite requirements that they locate absent fathers and establish paternity, agencies often devote little time and attention to these cases (Bustos, 1988; Garfinkel, 1992; Nichols-Casebolt, 1988; Ooms & Herendeen, 1990; Roberts, 1991).

In agency handling of paternity cases, delays are the rule rather than the exception with waiting periods average from 18 months to five years (Wattenberg, 1990). Thus, some fathers are gone by the time the agency gets around to their cases. Young mothers and fathers often view agency practices as invasive and demeaning and contacts with agency staff so alienate some individuals that they abandon the attempt to establish paternity or, in the case of fathers, they renege on their initial willingness to cooperate (Lerman & Ooms, 1993, Wattenberg, 1990). Lastly, the heavy emphasis upon collections evident in child support agencies may itself become a barrier in certain paternity cases. Some clients, persuaded to establish paternity for more nebulous reasons than potential support, react

negatively to the agency's single minded pursuit of its financial goals.

Among the teen parents themselves as well as their families, many factors have operated against the establishment of paternity. One of the most pervasive is the attitudes held by the young mothers and their parents. The young mother may have terminated her relationship with the baby's father and may want no further contact with him. She may fear he will attempt to enforce visitation, try to obtain custody or infringe upon what her family sees as its sole responsibility (Ooms & Owen, 1990; Wattenberg, 1987, 1990). Also, since the young fathers are often disadvantaged, undereducated and unemployed, teenage mothers and their families see little chance of collecting support and thus have no economic incentive to establish paternity (Smollar & Ooms, 1987; Wattenberg, 1990). Young fathers sometimes seek to avoid paternity establishment and child support awards by promising informal or in-kind support. They may threaten to leave rather than submit to the child support agency, and often this actually occurs.

For young single mothers who are already receiving public assistance such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or food stamps, the financial incentive to establish paternity is small. Since Child Support Enforcement agencies withhold all but $50 of any support payment collected to offset the cost of welfare, very little of the actual support payment winds up in the hands of the mother (Lerman & Ooms, 1993; Wattenberg, 1990). While these mothers must promise to cooperate with the paternity establishment process when they apply for welfare, it is almost impossible to determine their truthfulness if they report that they do not know the whereabouts of the father (Garfinkel, 1992; Ooms & Herendeen, 1990).

Grandparent liability statutes existing in some states (including the writer's) may have a negative impact upon paternity adjudications (Bustos, 1988; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1990). These statutes generally require the parents of under-age fathers to pay any child support that their sons are unable to pay themselves. Young fathers under age 18 are probably much less likely to admit paternity in circumstances where they know their own parents will be held financially responsible. Such statutes, if their provisions are understood, could also result in more resistance on the part of young mothers.

Up to this point in the discussion, it has been assumed that paternity establishment is in the best interests of the child, the parents and society. Paternity establishment has been viewed as a positive outcome and the reasons for its infrequency have been seen as conditions that must be overcome. For example, absence of knowledge about paternity is certainly a condition to be remedied so that single parents can make informed choices based on factual information. The presumption here is that information about paternity will lead to the conclusion that establishing paternity is the right course of action It must be pointed out, however, that there are circumstances in which paternity establishment may not be in the best interests of the child or his family members. Perhaps the most glaring example is that of a child conceived as a result of rape or incest. Understandably, a mother might resist paternity establishment in such a situation (Ooms & Owen, 1990; Roberts, 1991). Child support enforcement agencies have recognized this and they do provide a "good cause exception" to their paternity establishment requirements. Unmarried mothers may not always be advised of this option, however.

Other situations exist in which decisions regarding the wisdom of establishing paternity are less clear cut. Mothers may have solid reasons for wanting no contact with the father that fall short of rape or incest but are persuasive, nonetheless. Examples include fear of abusive or violent behavior on the part of the father, serious criminal history or mental illness. In such cases, women may acknowledge the benefits of paternity but believe they are outweighed by the disadvantages. Putative fathers may resist acknowledging paternity because they genuinely believe the accusation to be false. They may be pressured to acknowledge paternity without genetic testing and adequate protection of their legal rights. Establishing the wrong paternity may create a greater problem than not establishing it at all.

What these circumstances reveal is an issue tangled with conflicting interests and characterized by its complexity. There are no easy answers. The whole area of competing rights and obligations of individuals and society has scarcely been touched upon here but is one upon which could easily consume an extensive research effort.

> Paternity cases involve a web of varied and often conflicting interests -- the mother, the father, the grandparents, the social services professionals, the child support enforcement system, and the courts -- all of which must be integrated while still focusing on the primary interest of the child. (Wattenberg, 1987, p. 9)

For purposes of this practicum, the writer is adopting Wattenberg's position that the "long-term advantages that accrue from paternity are unquestionably life enhancing" (1987, p. 10) and that, in the vast majority of situations, paternity establishment is in the best interests of all concerned.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to increase paternity establishment for children of single teenage parents through education, counseling, case management and practical assistance, if necessary.

It was predicted that single teenage parents would develop an understanding of responsible parenthood and appreciate how paternity establishment relates to it. It was anticipated that they would understand the benefits, obligations and consequences of establishing the paternity of their children and, on the basis of factual information, be better prepared to make informed choices. The ultimate goal was to enable these teen parents to better meet their obligations to their children, themselves, the community and to society. It was also anticipated that single teenage parents would understand the mechanics of the paternity establishment process and be able to follow through with it.

Expected Outcomes

Two primary outcomes were anticipated in this practicum. The first is that

50 out of 60 single teenagers educated regarding paternity establishment will demonstrate knowledge of its meaning and its benefits, obligations and consequences as they relate to the child and to each parent. They will also understand the procedures by which to establish legal paternity and be able to follow through with them (see Appendix B and Appendix C).

To be eligible to participate, teenage females must be single and either pregnant and/or parenting. The fathers of the babies will be encouraged to participate whether or not they are teenagers. The number 60 represents the total number of teenagers drawn from all participating programs. For purposes of the first outcome, each parent educated will be counted as one. If both partners in a couple participate in the educational program, they will be counted as two.

The second outcome projected is that at least 15 out of the 60 will complete legal paternity establishment, will have initiated the process or will state a firm intention to do so within 60 days of the baby's birth (see Appendix B and Appendix D). Because some of the teens in this program may not give birth during the period when the practicum is taking place, it is necessary to accept something less than total completion in this outcome.

For the second outcome, the count will be determined by the number of paternities established. For example, if both partners in a couple participate in the program, they will be counted as two for the first outcome but as one if the paternity of one child is established. In the event that participants have more than one child, each child for which paternity is established will be counted as one.

Measurement of Outcomes

An intake survey was conducted with each participant to determine the level of need and assess interest in the program (see Appendix A). If both partners in a couple chose to participate, a separate survey was conducted with each person. The program manager, case manager or the person who worked most closely with the teen administered the surveys. Each program decided which clients were appropriate but all single teen parents/prospective parents were eligible.

Programs kept a copy and sent the original of each completed intake survey to the writer. It was originally planned that a Client Tracking Form would be opened when teens expressed willingness to participate in the project. This form was to be used to record demograhic information, the date of the educational presentation, the response of the teenager, the dates of followup discussions, paternity-related counseling and the results of the second outcome, i.e., whether paternity was or was not established. In actual practice, collecting completed forms was difficult and thus the Client Tracking Form had to be abandoned. The information that was to have been compiled on this form was written on one of the other forms or the writer gathered it through personal or telephone contact.

As soon as the project was well underway, it became evident that workers in the participating programs did not have sufficient time to fill out and return all three forms. Since the educational effort was one of the most important parts of the project, it seemed logical to emphasize time spent on this and to de-emphasize the importance of completing forms. The writer filled information gaps by calling,

visiting and writing the programs and also by maintaining a detailed practicum journal in which all pertinent events, meetings, telephone conversations and interesting vignettes were recorded. This journal supplied the rich detail that it was impossible to obtain in any other way.

Knowledge of the benefits, obligations and consequences of paternity establishment and the procedure to complete the process (Outcome I) was measured through the use of a Project Assessment Form (see Appendix B) and the subjective evaluation of the person who educated the teen. This person administered this assessment and recorded the results. In most cases, the assessment was given as a followup to the educational presentation or at the time the participant established paternity or declined to do so. Since the information contained on many of the Project Assessment Forms was limited, the writer contacted each program and spoke personally with those who worked with the teens. In this way, their subjective opinions about whether the teen learned enough to make an informed decision about establishing paternity were collected.

A final evaluation (see Appendix C) was also distributed to all case managers and others who worked with the teenagers in the project. The purpose of this evaluation was to obtain an overall assessment of the project by each individual, to collect opinions regarding the level of knowledge about paternity establishment before and after education, to provide an opportunity to address barriers to paternity establishment and make recommendations for change. The results of the Final Evaluation are contained in Figure 3, Page 64.

Results recorded on the Intake Survey, the Project Assessment and the Final

Evaluation as well as those gathered through personal meetings and telephone conferences were entered on the Project Rollup Form (see Appendix D). The writer then translated this information into a tabulation of overall project results. See Table 1, Paternity Project Results, Page 61. Reasons why participants failed to establish paternity were also assessed, recorded and described in the narrative.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Paternity establishment is a complex problem that does not lend itself to one-dimensional solutions. For this reason, it was not surprising that the literature revealed a wide range of ideas to address the issue. This is an area in which abundant intellectual activity has occurred, and many approaches were proposed.

To simplify this discussion, the various solution strategies were grouped into five categories according to the root causes they assume and the issues that have evolved from those causes. These categories are a) economic issues, b) ignorance or lack of information, c) attitudes and values, d) systems and procedures and, e) legislative issues. Again, most authorities acknowledged the multifaceted nature of the problem and did not suggest that one strategy would solve it. Rather, most endorsed a comprehensive approach.

Economic Issues

> Our society's irresponsible behavior toward the babies of teens -- and their parents -- often resembles the irresponsibility of the fathers that we are so quick to condemn. (Adams & Pittman, 1988, p. 25)

Numerous sources maintained that young fathers would be more likely to

voluntarily acknowledge paternity, remain involved with and support their children if their basic skills, employment opportunities and overall economic prospects were improved (Adams & Pittman, 1988; Johnson & Sum, 1987; Lerman & Ooms, Ooms & Owen, 1990; Vera Institute of Justice, 1990; Wilson, 1987).

The situation of young unmarried fathers is analogous in many respects to that of their female counterparts, that is, they are often members of the underclass. Although usually a few years older than their partners, they are typically just as economically and educationally disadvantaged (Vera Institute of Justice, 1990; Adams & Pittman, 1988). Unwed fathers are also likely to engage in delinquent or criminal behavior, according to Pirot-Good (1988), for reasons that are unrelated to the fact that they are fathers but grow out of the same set of circumstances, i.e., poverty and disadvantage. This suggests that strategies aimed toward improving vocational opportunities for young men would not only result in more responsible paternal behavior but might contribute to decreased criminal activity as well.

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) has long been on the forefront of concern for the male role in teenage childbearing. This organization, more than any other, has provided strong and consistent advocacy for education, employment and other programs to improve the life options of young men, to help them delay parenthood and to become more responsible when they do become parents (Adams & Pittman, 1988; Allen & Pittman, 1986; Johnson & Sum, 1987; Pittman & Adams, 1988; Savage, 1987; Sherman & Ebb, 1991). CDF has envisioned a comprehensive set of strategies to address economic issues including an increase in the minimum wage, basic, remedial and vocational education, employment

counseling and placement services. Alternative methods of meeting child support obligations were also suggested by CDF.

Ignorance and Lack of Information

Many authors mentioned the absence of available information about paternity establishment including its benefits, obligations and consequences as well as how to accomplish it most expeditiously. In fact, if any thread was firmly and consistently woven throughout the literature it was that more information and accurate information is necessary.

The presentation of this information may take many forms. Bustos (1988) and Wattenberg (1987) advocated for counseling with young parents regarding the advantages and obligations of paternity establishment. Adams and Pittman (1988) argued for aggressive public awareness campaigns to educate teenagers of both sexes regarding the rights and obligations of responsible parenthood. They also suggested the development of informational materials explaining paternity establishment and related issues. Wattenberg (1987, 1990) maintained that the timing of educational efforts is critical and that the presentation of paternity-related information should closely coincide with the birth of the child. Ooms and Owen (1990) agreed that timing is important and further suggested that male staff be recruited to serve unwed fathers and that educational efforts should be combined with the provision of other (i.e. employment related) services.

Most of the U.S. Government publications also acknowledged the need for more information and, indeed, they provided a fertile source (Cleveland & Williams, 1992; U.S D.H.H.S., 1990, 1993a, 1993c, 1994). Many of the

descriptions of program innovations being tested in the various states were found within these documents. The government has also published a number of brief, readable booklets that contain a wealth of helpful information about paternity, child support and other related issues (U.S.D.H.H.S., 1993b). Despite the availability of information, it is doubtful that it is reaching those most in need.

Attitudes and Values

Although the literature reflected ample discussion of changing attitudes and values and how they have contributed to the prevalence of nonmarital childbearing, proposals regarding how these values might be redirected were few and far between. Even Popenoe (1993), while lamenting the decline of the family, provided scarcely a glimmer of an idea about how this decline could be arrested. One exception to this generalization was Vinovskis (1988) and Vinovskis and Chase-Lansdale (1988) who argued for teaching teenagers to postpone sexual activity, providing information on contraception for those who are sexually active and encouraging those who have babies to get married. Teen marriages are more resilient than we think, said these authors and policies should be reevaluated to support them. Frank Furstenberg (1988) disagreed, however, and delivered a scathing rebuttal in "Bringing Back the Shotgun Wedding."

The views of Vinovskis were foreshadowed to some extent by the definitive study of teen pregnancy and childbearing, *Risking the Future* (Hayes, 1987), which presented a comprehensive set of strategies for addressing the problem within the framework of three basic goals: a) prevention of pregnancy, b) development of alternatives to teenage parenting and, c) promotion of positive

outcomes for teenage parents and their children. These strategies, though lacking the somewhat moralistic overtones of the marriage advocates, certainly seemed to be aimed in similar directions.

Finally, Charles Murray (1993), well known as a spokesman for conservative social policies, argued that the availability of public assistance encourages single teenage childbearing and should be discontinued. By ending welfare benefits, young women would be forced to rethink their decisions about childbearing and make other choices. They would refuse to have sex, insist on marriage or give up their children for adoption if they knew that financial support from the government would not be available. Ultimately, single teenage parenting would no longer be acceptable (similar to the 1950s) and values would change.

Systems and Procedural Issues

Since problems encountered in dealing with systems and agencies, principally the Child Support Enforcement agencies and the courts, were an almost universal concern, various suggestions were offered regarding how to circumvent the system or to make it more efficient and humane. A major thrust of these proposals involved simplification of the paternity establishment process to make it convenient for unmarried parents to voluntarily acknowledge paternity. Though the Family Support Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-485) encouraged states to initiate simplified civil procedures for paternity establishment, only a handful have actually done so.

Washington State's well known hospital-based paternity establishment program was one of the first (Cleveland & Williams, 1992; Hoover, 1993).

Through this program, unmarried parents are given information about paternity establishment shortly after the child's birth and hospital personnel provide the opportunity for the parents to sign an affidavit of paternity. Washington has also published a number of brochures that provide easy-to-read, understandable information about paternity for young parents (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 1989a, 1989b).

Other states to initiate hospital-based programs include Ohio (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1993a), Virginia (Cleveland & Williams, 1992) and West Virginia. A West Virginia pilot project recorded an admirable 40 percent success rate (Kreps, 1992).

Wattenberg (1993) agreed that paternity establishment procedures should be simplified and decriminalized and added that incentives should be provided to child support (IV-D) agencies to raise the priority of paternity actions. Increased resources must also be allocated to IV-D offices to enable them to handle their growing caseloads. These proposals were seconded by Garfinkel (1992) who reported that states with a strong commitment to paternity establishment that have dedicated adequate resources to the effort have substantially improved their performance. Information provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1992, 1994) confirmed Garfinkel's assertion.

Adams and Pittman (1988) discussed alternative methods of enforcing paternal responsibility and collecting child support through programs designed especially for young fathers. Such a program in Marion County, Indiana, includes education, vocational training and employment while enforcing minimum child

support orders and allowing credit toward child support through program participation. A similar program emphasizing comprehensive services for young fathers was described by Sander (1993).

Legislative Solution Strategies

Several strategies were suggested to increase paternity establishment that probably would require some legislative action. Also, several recently enacted statutes will significantly impact the paternity process.

Wattenberg (1993) proposed reforming the child support guidelines to take the economic circumstances of young fathers into consideration and to recognize nonfinancial contributions. She also suggested a change in incentives provided to child support enforcement agencies to make paternity actions a higher priority. In both cases, some legislation might be required to accomplish the change.

Bustos (1988) and Smollar and Ooms (1987) discussed holding grandparents legally responsible for the child support payments of their minor children and, in fact, several states have enacted grandparent liability laws.

Several statutes have been enacted in the writer's state in the past few years to allow paternity to be established through a simple civil procedure and to develop a hospital-based paternity program (House Bill 2109). The recently enacted federal Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (Public Law 103-66) has superseded the local legislation and has actually given the state Division of Child Support Enforcement more time to develop and initiate the hospital-based program.

Other Ideas for Increasing Paternity Establishments

Discussions with professionals working in the field of paternity and child

support yielded a number of valuable suggestions. Gary Kreps, the recently retired director of West Virginia's successful hospital-based program, maintained that creating a climate of cooperation among agencies involved in the process is critical to the development of effective paternity programs (personal communication, September 9, 1993). Another suggestion included advertising and conducting educational seminars for unmarried parents (K. Bell, personal communication, September 9, 1993). Individualized case management with consistent followup and concrete assistance with the required paperwork may encourage young unmarried parents to establish paternity (A. Thompson, personal communication, May 10, 1994). And finally, the manager of the Teen Prenatal Express suggested that a Paternity Hotline be established to assist in answering questions of unmarried parents and clearing up the numerous misunderstandings that exist about the process (P. Baird, personal communication, August, 1994).

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The literature provides an abundance of ideas for increasing the rate of paternity establishments among young unmarried parents. Many solutions suggested, however, require extensive system changes within the child support agencies, substantial shifts in economic policy or legislative action. Although these were beyond the scope of this practicum, there was still much to be accomplished.

One of the most pervasive problems encountered in the literature and in the writer's personal conversations with teens and professionals was the lack of

reliable information about paternity establishment. This includes the benefits, obligations and consequences as well as practical information about voluntary acknowledgement such as what needs to be signed, where to get it, how much it costs and the procedure for filing the papers. Although this absence of information is not unique to single teenagers, it is certainly prevalent among this group and exacerbated by their youth and inexperience. Thus, the project was designed to promote knowledge in an important area among those who are most ignorant.

The writer proposed to increase paternity establishment among single teenage parents through education, counseling, case management and practical assistance, when necessary. Although the ethical issues surrounding paternity establishment were not ignored, the primary thrust of this effort was the provision of information and facilitation of a process that young parents had decided to pursue rather than an attempt to persuade them to adopt the views of the writer or those of the program staff involved in the project. Every attempt was made to discuss issues openly, to present various perspectives and to respect differences of opinion.

Soon after the project was initiated, it became clear that ignorance about paternity issues on the part of professionals was an even greater problem than the writer had realized and had to be addressed if progress with single teen parents were to occur. Such professionals as social workers, nurses, case managers and outreach workers, even doctors, program directors and vital statistics workers, knew little about what paternity establishment is, why it is a concern, what it means to the parties involved and what they can do to encourage it. Thus, a new goal emerged for the practicum which was to deliver basic information to the

professionals who interact with single parents or direct programs that do.

The project did not "solve" the problem but was an important first step and contributed valuable information to enlighten and facilitate future efforts. It also served a critical need in the writer's state. Even though the goals and outcomes had to be adjusted somewhat as a result of practical realities, it was a worthwhile effort. Single teenagers and the professionals who work with them need the information and will certainly derive long-term benefit from having access to it.

Report of Action Taken

Initiating the Paternity Establishment Project

The paternity establishment project began early in February, 1994, with calls to participating programs to arrange inservice training for those who had agreed to be involved in the project. The first two trainings were held in February for the program managers, coordinators, case managers and interns in the two urban sites. The writer developed the materials upon which the content for the trainings was based (see list of materials in Appendix E) and supplemented them with appropriate published information. The initial presentations included information about the purpose of the project, its ethical position, basic information about the benefits, obligations and consequences of paternity establishment and the methods by which it may be accomplished. The writer explained voluntary acknowledgement of paternity and distributed the legal documents, discussed their completion and the procedure for filing them in the County Clerk of the Superior Court's Office. Blood/genetic testing for uncertain or contested paternities was also

discussed and local referral sources for testing and followup services were given.

The forms for tracking participants were distributed and anticipated project outcomes were discussed. The writer had obtained an excellent video presentation on paternity establishment from West Virginia's hospital-based program which was shown and a copy was given to each program (West Virginia Department of Health & Human Resources, 1993). Pamphlets on paternity establishment, suitable for young parents, were provided in quantities sufficient to meet each program's needs (Arizona Department of Economic Security, 1991; Channing L. Bete Co., 1993; U.S.D.H.H.S., 1993b).

An inservice training for both rural programs was presented in March, 1994. This presentation followed the same format as the previous trainings and the same materials were included and distributed. The program director, nurse/case manager and classroom teacher of the school-based teen parenting program took part in this training. It was also attended by the nurse/coordinator of the teen prenatal care program and five of her nurse/outreach workers.

Following the inservice training, programs began selecting candidates for the project on the basis of the following criteria:

- Participants were single teenagers, either expectant parents or already parents of children for whom paternity had not been established. Fathers were welcomed.
- Participants signed consent forms (See Appendix F) and agreed to listen to a presentation about paternity establishment.
- Participants were accepted into the project during the entire eight

months of the implementation and closed whenever the issue of paternity was resolved.

The writer encouraged each program to determine its own best method for presenting the information about paternity, and offered to act as a resource to all staff involved in the project for individual or group presentations on paternity issues, question and answer sessions, assistance with filings, trips to the Superior Court and whatever additional help was needed. Telephone consultation was available at all times and was used frequently.

The programs handled the paternity education in different ways. The prenatal care programs approached potential participants individually. If they seemed interested, the case managers asked them to sign a consent form and then presented the paternity education along with other prenatal information. They later followed up (or, in some cases, didn't follow up) with additional information, an assessment and an invitation to fill out and file the paternity forms. The rural teen parenting program used a classroom format and presented education about paternity establishment to the class as a group. The final assessment of paternity knowledge was also delivered as a classroom exercise.

The coordinator of the urban case management program approached the teenagers primarily as couples and with a great deal of personal involvement and diligence. As a result, her success rate in educating teen parents and establishing paternities was astonishing. Her special effort to include the fathers of the babies in the process appeared to have been an important factor in the positive outcomes. While selective in deciding who was appropriate for the project, her assessments

were accurate and almost everyone who was educated actually established the paternity of his/her child. With the writer's occasional assistance, she managed to surmount the mighty barriers encountered at the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court and to establish seven paternities out of 15 total participants in the project.

Overcoming Obstacles to Voluntary Acknowledgement

Educating the single teen parents actually turned out to be one of the easiest parts of the project. Although the subject is complex and levels of understanding varied considerably, comments written on the intake surveys revealed that most teens were interested in learning about paternity establishment and were open to the information. The writer confirmed this assessment through conversations with the coordinators and case managers in all programs. Few teenagers stated that they were not interested in the information although several stated that they planned to get married before the baby's birth and did not need it.

Other aspects of the project were not so smoothly dispatched, however. Educating single teen parents to the point of readiness for voluntary acknowledgement of paternity was only the beginning of a process that was riddled with many frustrations. Among the numerous barriers that surfaced, one of the most immediate was the need for the services of a notary public. Paternity acknowledgements must be notarized before they can be filed in the Superior Court and if the signatories are minors, a parent or guardian must witness the signature and cosign the document. Although one might expect this to be a simple process, it caused many problems and impeded several paternity establishments.

Most notaries require evidence of identity if the applicant is not known to

them. In one instance, the notary requested a "picture ID" and when the young man who was attempting to establish the paternity stated that he had left his driver's license at home, the notary refused to witness the document. Thus, the papers could not be completed and the paternity establishment failed. The "golden moment" was lost and the young couple did not establish their child's paternity.

Anticipating such problems, the writer asked the coordinator of the urban case management program and the program manager of the urban prenatal care program to become notaries themselves or to identify a person to become a notary who would cooperate with the project. Although this process took several months to accomplish, it actually occurred in both urban programs and proved to be very helpful in surmounting one of the small but sometimes impenetrable barriers faced in attempting to establish paternities. The coordinator of the case management program, whose appointment as a notary was effective in April, 1994, stated that becoming a notary was one of the most important keys to her success.

Procedural difficulties -- such as arriving at the courthouse on the wrong day or too late in the day, lack of proper identification, answering a question incorrectly, failure to have signatures notarized or to fill out the papers correctly -- any or all such obstacles could and did occur. These occurrences made the filing of voluntary acknowledgements of paternity unpredictable, amusing and serendipitous. Although the writer and program staff attempted to avoid problems through preparation and planning, it was a vain effort as something different and unanticipated happened every time.

The filing fee of $74 for paternity acknowledgements was an additional and

especially frustrating complication. Most teenage parents simply do not have the money to pay this fee. Though fee waivers are available for welfare recipients and individuals with low incomes (almost all teenage parents qualify in one category or the other), the completion and approval process for these waivers added another hurdle to be overcome, another set of criteria to be met, another explanation to court personnel -- indeed, a whole new layer of bureaucracy.

The reasons why these problems occurred has more to do with policies and procedures than people, in this writer's opinion. Generally speaking, the people encountered at the Superior Court, the Division of Child Support Enforcement and the vital statistics offices were courteous and helpful. Most, however, did not understand the "larger picture" and had no grasp of how their piece of the puzzle fit into the whole. Voluntary acknowledgement of paternity is not seen as a right that unmarried parents can and should exercise and as a benefit to the child, the state and its taxpayers, but rather as an unfamiliar challenge to the system and people who process the paperwork and ensure that it is handled correctly.

Notwithstanding the system and procedural difficulties, voluntary acknowledgements were completed. Tenacity, patience and good humor were required and endurance of considerable frustration a necessity. "Simple administrative procedures" for voluntary acknowledgement have been legislatively mandated, but they are not a reality at this time. All of the paternities established were the result of extraordinary efforts related to this practicum project. One can only speculate how the typical teenager, single, broke and uninformed would fare.

Working with the Teen Parenting Programs

Although the program managers in each cooperating program had agreed to take part in the project, the case managers and other workers probably did not realize exactly what was involved. Indeed, nobody really knew what would happen until the project was actually underway. While the writer had described the project and explained paternity establishment in detail at the inservice trainings, the complexity of the project and the subject itself was such that it required much more time and commitment than most had anticipated.

In any case, the writer soon became concerned that assessments were not being completed and that most workers were not following through with voluntary acknowledgements of paternity. Whatever the explanation, many meetings, phone calls and reminders were required and, even then, it was not easy to collect the information needed to document project results. It was even more difficult to motivate workers to present the paternity affidavits, get them notarized and take their clients to the Clerk of the Superior Court's office.

Communication with the programs in the rural area (Rural A and Rural B) was another problem. Apparently they did not personally assist their project participants in completing voluntary acknowledgements in the Superior Court and because of the distance involved, the writer was unable to help them with this. Their schedules did not permit them to make the time consuming trips to the court, to accompany the teenagers through the process and to deal with the numerous frustrations that predicably occur. Nevertheless, 47 rural teenagers received education about paternity that they probably would not have had if the project had

not been implemented and three established paternity with the help of the Child Support Enforcement agency. Moreover, since the rural teenage parenting program plans to incorporate paternity education into its regular prenatal curriculum, many more teenage parents will be exposed to education about paternity establishment in the future.

The prenatal care program in the urban area (Urban A) also had its share of problems. Because of the nature of its teenage clients (mostly indigent and many non-English speaking illegal aliens), most were poor candidates for paternity establishment. Many of these teenagers did not appear to grasp the implications of the process and seemed suspicious of the motives of the educators. In fact, the young people from this program who did establish paternity already knew something about it and were encouraged by family members. This realization, coupled with first-hand experience of the voluntary acknowledgement procedure, led to one the primary lessons learned through this practicum: Paternity establishment is not a process that is easily understood and independently handled by those (teens or adults) who lack familiarity with the dominant culture, in addition to motivation and tenacity.

The urban case management program for parenting teens (Urban B) was the most successful in terms of the number of paternities established. The coordinator of this program, who also worked directly with the teenagers, was committed to the project and able to carry through all aspects of the paternity process herself. In other words, she educated the teenagers about paternity, she presented them with voluntary acknowledgement and fee waiver forms, she notarized them and finally,

she drove the teens to the Superior Court and helped them file the papers. Clearly, this was the kind of effort that success in the establishment of paternity required.

Educating the Educators

As previously mentioned, one of the most interesting discoveries of this practicum project was how little most people know about the subject of legal paternity. Few can define it and even fewer still know about its benefits and obligations. The fact that millions of children in the United States are now being raised with no legal (or familial) connections to their fathers has escaped almost everyone and the social implications of this are only just beginning to emerge. Vice President Dan Quayle championed family values (Whitehead, 1993) and Charles Murray (1993) railed against illegitimacy. Quayle's concerns were laughed away and the solutions Murray proposed are so extreme that it is difficult for most moderates to entertain them. The problem remains, however, and solutions must be found and values need to be addressed. Values are central to the issue of paternity.

By early March it became evident that educating single teenagers would succeed only if the professionals working with them were familiar with basic information about paternity and had considered the advantages and disadvantages to the extent that they could discuss them knowledgeably. The inservice trainings, while successful, brought the complexity of the issue into sharp focus, raised difficult new questions and convinced the writer that the delivery of paternity establishment education must be extended beyond the boundaries of the practicum project and into the larger community.

Through existing professional contacts, the writer offered basic information about paternity establishment to community professionals. Appendix G contains the outline used for these presentations. Eight workshops were presented free of charge during the period in which the practicum was being implemented. Workshops averaged about two hours in length with a question and answer period following each presentation. Handouts included a summary of the benefits and obligations of paternity establishment, a list of local referral sources, copies of documents needed to voluntarily acknowledge paternity and apply for fee waivers, and several informative booklets (Arizona Department of Economic Security, 1991; Channing L. Bete Company, 1993; U.S.D.H.H.S., 1993b).

Approximately 120 professionals were educated through these workshops. Although they represented a wide spectrum of professional disciplines, the writer made an effort to attract those whose daily interactions involved single parents or expectant parents. Social workers, nurses, case managers and counselors were specifically targeted. Examples of these workshops included one given for the statewide perinatal social worker organization in March. Another workshop was presented in April to rural health outreach staff in a rural county and in June a third paternity seminar was delivered to the staff of a nonprofit agency that serves pregnant and parenting teens.

The workshops were well received and evaluations were excellent. Comments made by those attending, however, reiterated the complexity of the subject and reflected the continuing need for more in-depth information, hands-on practice in completing the various forms and more opportunities to explore the

ethical issues involved. Discussion and questions raised during the workshops also revealed sharp controversy about whether and under what circumstances paternity should, or should not, be established.

Stories About Paternity: Angie and Juan, Robert and Mary

Angie was one of those clients who the case management coordinator really worried about. At 16, with a history of runaway incidents and protective services referrals, she was not a good candidate for education about paternity establishment. She was intellectually limited, had no home, no family resources and moved around frequently with her little daughter -- staying with one friend for awhile, then another and another. Just keeping track of her whereabouts was a major undertaking for her case manager. But the reasons to try to establish paternity for the child were compelling. The baby was at risk and without a legal father. Who would care for her if something happened to Angie?

Fortunately, Juan's family was interested in the child and open to being educated about paternity establishment. In fact, it was their concern that Angie would leave the state with the baby and that Juan would have no legal rights that led to the case management program's involvement with this young couple. Family members can impede or facilitate the establishment of paternity and in this case it was the latter. Angie had no viable family and though Juan's seemed chaotic, at least they were available and interested.

This paternity was established before the case manager received her appointment as a notary public. Thus, when she found both parents ready and willing to sign the documents, she had to locate a notary who would witness them

without requiring identification that Angie and Juan didn't have, i.e., driver's licenses or other identification cards with pictures.

Finally, a notary at the school that Angie attended agreed to sign the forms and the case manager later took them to the Superior Court for filing. The paternity of Angie and Juan's daughter was established on April 25, 1994. When asked why she had made the decision to establish paternity, Angie said, "So nobody will call my kid a bastard."

It is a common misconception that fathers are seldom interested in their children and that they almost always behave irresponsibly. Also, it was not this writer's experience that the partners of teenage mothers were mostly drug dealers or otherwise involved in violent criminal activities. Some were, certainly, but not all by any means. Many fathers and their families are interested in their children and want to be included in their lives. Angie and Juan were one example; Robert and Mary were another.

Robert and Mary came to the County Health Department for paternity education with Robert's mother. He was a minor and therefore needed parental consent in order to sign an acknowledgement of paternity. Robert and Mary had already read the pamphlets about paternity, had discussed it with the case manager and told the writer that they thought they understood it rather well. Obviously, they had given it considerable thought and had made a conscious decision. Grandma, however, needed more information and had many questions.

Although she affirmed her family's intention to contribute financially to the care of the child, she was worried that Robert, who had two more years in high

school and no job, would be assessed for child support. She could pay, she said, and would pay, but Robert could not.

The families of both young people were concerned that their children complete their educations and it seems likely that they will. Mary, a recent high school graduate, received a scholarship to a state university and had already arranged day care for her infant who was one month old on the day that paternity was established. Robert also seemed motivated to finish high school and expressed hopes to obtain an athletic scholarship. Eventually, they plan to marry.

After the paternity documents were signed and notarized, the writer, the case manager, the grandmother, the parents and the baby made the trip to the Superior Court to file them. The first stop was the Probate Counter where fee waivers are processed. A sign stated "NO FEE WAIVERS AFTER 2:30 PM" and the time was 2:35 p.m. While the woman behind the counter protested that it was too late, the writer pleaded that she make an exception, citing the problems involved in getting all the appropriate people together at the same time, traveling to the court and finding an open parking meter. She relented but later challenged the waiver because Mary was living with her parents. After another argument and several discussions with supervisors, the fee waivers were finally approved.

From that point on it was smooth sailing. When approaching the Domestic Relations Filing Counter, a fortuitous discovery was made. The person manning the window was named "Andrew" and, luckily, the baby had the same given name. Not only were there no further difficulties but Andrew presented the parents with an extra "certified" copy of their son's paternity documents.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Briefly restated, the problem was that single teenage parents do not establish the legal paternity of their children. The solution was to educate single teenage parents and prospective parents about the benefits, obligations and consequences of paternity establishment, to explain the procedure for voluntary acknowledgement of paternity and to assist them with its completion when they choose to do so.

As the implementation took place, it became clear that professionals who work with teenage parents know so little about paternity issues that they cannot educate and/or assist their clients. Thus, another solution strategy emerged: to provide professionals with the information so that they can assist their clients in making informed decisions about paternity establishment

There were two primary outcomes projected for this practicum. The first was that 50 out of 60 single teenagers educated would understand its benefits, obligations and consequences of paternity establishment for the child and the parents. It was also projected that they would understand the procedure by which to establish legal paternity and be able to follow through with it.

Even though the project was most assuredly a successful educational effort,

this outcome was not met. The reason is that among 79 participants who were given the initial survey, 25 were never given the project assessment because they moved away, dropped out of the programs or were unavailable when the assessments were administered. This problem occurred almost exclusively in the rural programs and illustrates the instability of the population.

Thus, only 54 assessments were completed. Among these, almost all gained knowledge, but assessing its level of sophistication was not realistic. This is because the writer underestimated the complexity of the subject matter, the variation in responses recorded on assessment forms and problems encountered in collecting the forms. Thus, only a rough estimate of the results of the educational intervention, i.e., "showed knowledge and lacked knowledge" was possible. Of 54 participants assessed, 50 (over 90 percent) learned enough to be included in the "showed knowledge" category.

The second part of the first outcome was also not met. Although teenagers (and adults) may, theoretically, understand the procedure for establishing legal paternity, it is simply too complex, too inconsistent and frustrating to expect them to be able to follow through with it on their own. Only very motivated, tenacious and "system wise" individuals can do that. Teenagers need assistance in filing out the documents, applying for fee waivers and completing the process at the Superior Court. With the existing system, it is unreasonable to expect otherwise.

The second outcome projected was that 15 out of 60 single teenagers educated would complete the establishment of legal paternity or would make a firm commitment to do so. This outcome was met. Out of 79 original participants, 12

paternities were established and 11 individuals stated a firm intention to complete the process after the birth of their babies. The success rate projected for the practicum was 25 percent, i.e., it was predicted that 15 of 60 (25 percent) educated would establish paternity or commit to doing so. In actuality, this percentage was exceeded by four percentage points and if only those who completed the project assessment are counted, the success rate rises to almost 43 percent.

It is possible, of course, that some of those who stated they will establish paternity after giving birth will not actually do so, but if only half of them do, the success rate is still a very admirable 33 percent when based on the total of 54 participants who completed the project assessments.

When these results are compared with the state's 1992 paternity establishment rate of 12.8 percent (for mothers of all ages) as assessed by the Children Defense Fund (Ebb, 1994), it is clear that education combined with assistance makes a positive and substantial difference. And if the assistance that was offered to participants in Urban B had been available to those in other programs, the writer believes that results would have been even more impressive. While it is unlikely that most professionals interacting with parenting teens would be as diligent in their efforts as the coordinator of Urban B, even modest attempts, if linked to the forthcoming hospital-based paternity establishment program, should result in significant improvement.

The results of both outcomes of the Paternity Establishment Project are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

PATERNITY PROJECT RESULTS

Outcome I

Program	Surveys Completed	Assessments Completed	Showed Knowledge	Lacked Knowledge	Undetermined	Total
Urban A	17	16	13	3	1	17
Urban B	15	15	15			15
Rural A	31	16	16		15	31
Rural B	16	7	6	1	9	16
TOTAL	79	54	50	4	25	79

Outcome II

Program	Established Paternity	Declined Paternity	Married Before Birth	Establishment Probable	Unlikely or Uncertain	Total
Urban A	2*	7		6		17
Urban B	7**			1*		15
Rural A	3	13	2	4	9	31
Rural B		9	2		5	16
TOTAL	12	29	4	11	14	79

* Represents the number of couples who established or will establish paternity.

** Number includes 6 couples

Demographic information collected on project participants was interesting. The majority (56 percent) were Hispanic although this ethnic group does not constitute the majority of teenagers in the state. It does reflect the reality that Hispanics are disproportionately represented among teenage mothers and that many, probably because of their economic disadvantage, are involved in programs supported by public funds. In 1993, births to Hispanic teens in the state accounted for 45 percent of all teen births although Hispanics represented only about one-fourth of all teenagers (Mrela, 1994b). Certainly this data confirms the need for culturally sensitive and relevant programs that target Hispanic teens and employ Spanish speaking staff.

Another item of interest is the high percentage of participants in the middle teen years. Sixty-seven percent were in the 15 - 17 age range. This data mirrors the increase in births among this age group and suggests that public policies expecting 15 - 17 year-olds to be educated, self-sufficient and off welfare assistance within two years may not be realistic. Table 2 provides project demographics.

Table 2

PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT DEMOGRAPHICS

Program	Sex		Race				Age				Total
	F	M	H	B	W	I	10-14	15-17	18-19	20+	
Urban A	14	3	5	5	7			11	5	1	17
Urban B	8	7	3		11	1		7	4	4	15
Rural A	28	3	24	1	5	1	1	22	8		31
Rural B	16		12		4		2	13	1		16
TOTAL	66	13	44	6	27	2	3	53	18	5	79

The results of the Final Evaluation distributed to all professionals who participated in the Paternity Establishmert Project are recorded in Figure 3. Evaluation forms (see Appendix C) were sent to all participating programs with a request for any adult who worked in the project to complete an evaluation. Ten responses were received and at least one represented more than one respondent.

The final evaluation revealed a generally positive response to the training and support provided by the project director (the writer) as well as to the usefulness of the supplementary materials. All respondents agreed that the initial level of knowledge about paternity establishment on the part of the pregnant and parenting teenagers was almost nil, and many added comments to the effect that their own knowledge was minimal at the outset. In fact, when asked what they (the adult professionals) learned through participation in the project, several stated that everything they now know about paternity establishment was an outgrowth of their participation in the project.

The item eliciting the most responses was the "barriers to paternity establishment." Many respondents listed several barriers, the most frequent of which involved difficulties surrounding the court system, procedures for voluntary acknowledgement, and associated costs. Even those who did not assist with the completion of voluntary acknowledgements of paternity in the Clerk of the Court's Office were distressed and intimidated by the process.

Perhaps most intriguing of all were the responses concerning the father's role. Dads may be more interested in and willing to support their children than is commonly supposed. This result confims the writer's view.

Figure 3

FINAL EVALUATION RESULTS

Ten final evaluation forms were received. Some represented the responses of more than one person. Total responses to items do not always equal 10 because some respondents gave more than one answer.

1. **Initial inservice training**

   Excellent = 4
   Good = 5
   Didn't attend = 1

2. **Support from project director:**

   Excellent = 6
   Good = 4

3. **Usefulness of tracking forms:**

   Good = 5
   Average = 5

4. **Usefulness of booklets and video:**

   Excellent = 9
   Average = 1

5. **Clients' initial level of knowledge about paternity issues:**

   None = 5 Very little = 4 Many misunderstandings = 3 Negative impressions = 1

6. **Clients' understanding following paternity education:**

   High = 2 Good = 2 Better = 6 Misunderstandings cleared up = 2
   Too complicated to be retained for very long = 1

7. **Clients' response to paternity education:**

   Interested = 5 Positive, receptive, good, appreciative = 4 Not interested = 1
   Not willing to follow through = 2 Created artificial barriers to avoid issue = 1

8. **Major barriers to paternity establishment:**

   Complex court system and procedures = 6 Lack of education = 5 Lack of funds = 3
   No transportation = 2 Distrust of legal system = 2 Cultural attitudes and belief systems = 2
   Worries about father's actions = 2 Too time consuming = 2 Low self-esteem = 1
   Notary problems = 1 Tentative nature of relationships = 1 Undocumented people = 1

9. **Suggestions for increasing rates of paternity establishment:**

   More education and assistance = 7 Decrease legal barriers and costs, streamline system = 3
   Hospital-based program = 3 Holistic programs & education for fathers = 2
   Place info in clinics, doctor's offices, billboards = 2 Make prerequisite for welfare = 1
   Paternity information hotline = 1

10. **What adult participants learned through participation in project:**

    Acquired needed information about paternity establishment = 3
    Many children being born now will not know their fathers = 2
    Young people are more open to paternity establishment than commonly believed = 2
    Fathers are not as resistant as people think they are = 2
    Paternity information is an important part of prenatal education = 2

Results of the added goal of educating professionals about paternity issues were encouraging, however, the task is monumental and the writer's efforts have barely scratched the surface. Until recently, interest in establishing paternity has been virtually nonexistent in the state except for those working in the Division of Child Support Enforcement, isolated researchers such as Ann Nichols-Casebolt and a few dedicated county attorneys. Most professionals with whom the writer has discussed the issue have admitted that they knew practically nothing about it and shared the same misconceptions their clients had. Even after educational presentations that included a video on paternity, informational booklets, various handouts and detailed instructions for completion of forms, the subject remains complex. In fact, the writer's offer to provide telephone consultation and assistance to anyone who needed it was often accepted and may have been a key factor in the establishment of several paternities.

An unexpected obstacle to paternity education for professionals was the resistance encountered among some women. Although the source of this resistance is not completely clear, it seems related to their disbelief in the willingness of males to assume responsbility for their own children and disenchantment with the legal system's ability to enforce it. Such attitudes are certainly justified. Child support enforcement agencies have been notoriously ineffective in obtaining and enforcing support orders and men who have been determined to escape responsibility have usually succeeded. Also, some women view childrearing as solely a female activity from which males can be almost totally excluded. While men have exerted power and control over many aspects of life, bearing and rearing a child is one in which

women can retain the upper hand. Self-sufficient adult women may feel capable of raising children alone without support. Such women often express little tolerance for abusive, violent or nonsupportive behavior and see their children as better off in single parent environments. Whatever the merits of these viewpoints, they certainly add to the complexity of the problem and make it more difficult to solve.

During paternity presentations, the writer attempted to address questions openly but avoid arguments over emotional issues that defy resolution. Instead, education about paternity establishment was presented as factual information required for an individual to make an informed decision. Most professionals agreed that it is important for single parents to understand the facts before they decide whether or not to establish the paternity of their children.

Approximately 120 professionals who work with teen parents attended paternity workshops provided by the writer and other training opportunities will be offered in the future. Directors, coordinators and others who participated in the paternity establishment project are also disseminating information within the community. Overall, the attempt to educate professionals was successful although it is difficult to quantify. Publication and distribution of booklets providing basic information and referral sources should greatly enhance the effort.

Discussion

> People today, most of all children, dearly want families in their lives. They long for that special, and hopefully life-long, social and emotional bond that family membership brings. Adults can perhaps live much of their lives, with some success, apart from families. The problem is that children, if we wish them to become successful adults, cannot. (Popenoe, 1993, p. 540)

Paternity and the various issues surrounding it are only just beginning to tug at the sleeve of our national consciousness. Most people, and this includes scholars and professionals as well as the general public, have not recognized this concern and have not considered what the impact will be when millions of children reach adulthood with no connections with their fathers. Perhaps this impact is already being experienced in the recent escalation of crime and violence. Perhaps there is a connection. It is probably true that children actually do better in families where there are two parents or at least more than one adult to provide love and care and assume the responsibilities. Maybe Dan Quayle was right (Whitehead, 1993).

And if so, then what? Establishing paternity, while in the best interests of the child and society, will not resolve the underlying problem of family breakdown. Advocacy for marriage, monogamy and avoidance of divorce, however worthy these goals might be, will probably not solve it either. Denying welfare benefits and medical care to unwed mothers is not likely to reverse the avalanche of change. The forces underlying these changes have existed far longer than we know and are too complex to be significantly impacted by simplistic solutions.

Values are central to the issue of paternity. While American tradition exalts independence and rugged individualism, these values clash with the interdependence that characterizes viable families. This conflict becomes evident when other factors make family stability more difficult to maintain. Population mobility and urbanization combined with the largescale entrance of women into the workforce and the loss of good jobs for low-skill workers have contributed

mightily to family breakdown. How we reconcile these conflicting values and adapt to the new economic and social realities will have a lot to do with what happens to American families.

In the meantime, everything possible should be done to educate professionals and single parents about paternity establishment and the process should be made less complicated and expensive. It should be taken for granted that every child has a right to know his/her father and to have a relationship with him. Except in rare situations, failure to establish paternity does not reflect or advance equality for women, but rather dooms them and their children to lives of poverty, disadvantage and isolation. What's more, it allows men to evade responsibility and to become and remain renegades.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this practicum is the questions that it raises. Establishing paternity is not merely a problem to be solved, but a perplexing social issue that must be thoroughly explored. As this occurs, it will shed light on other, more fundamental dilemmas of American life.

Recommendations

1. Before efforts to increase rates of paternity establishment among single parents can expect to succeed, public awareness of the issue must be raised and professionals who interact with single parents must be educated. They must understand the benefits, obligations and consequences of paternity establishment well enough to explain it to their clients and they must also possess up-to-date information about how to complete the procedure and

how to obtain additional services such as genetic testing and child support enforcement. Until a critical mass of information among professionals has been achieved, energy should be directed toward this issue first.

2. Hospital-based paternity establishment programs are now federally mandated, thus a logical approach is to initiate prenatal education programs that link with the hospital paternity programs. In other words, single expectant parents should receive education about paternity along with childbirth and infant care education. They should be prepared for the paternity recorder and should be knowledgeable about the documents they will be asked to sign. The hospital should not be the first place that an unmarried mother hears the word "paternity."

3. Since the dedication and commitment of the coordinator of the case management program (Urban B) resulted in spectacular success, attempts to facilitate paternity establishment should endeavor to identify individuals who have both the opportunity and the interest in pursuing the project from beginning to end. This means not only delivering paternity education, but providing practical assistance, including notary services, transportation, moral support and trouble shooting at all points during the process.

4. Strong emphasis should be placed upon the inclusion of fathers in paternity education programs. It is assumed, often erroneously, that fathers are not interested or wish to escape involvement. The experience of the writer and the urban programs (Urban A & B) did not confirm this. Paternal participation actually enhanced the likelihood of paternity establishment. Indeed, the inclusion of any willing family members in the educational efforts is highly recommended as they so often play a key role in decision-making about paternity.

5. Future efforts to increase rates of paternity establishment among single teenage parents in the writer's state should target Hispanics because this group has an especially high birthrate among single teens, a high level of poverty and because it is rapidly growing. Paternity establishment programs should focus on providing culturally sensitive and relevant educational services and strive to involve bilingual, bicultural professionals

Dissemination

> There is political consensus about biological paternity carrying with it the obligation to provide for the child's ... well-being. However, a true social consensus on this point may take a long time to develop. (U.S.D.H.H.S., 1990, p. 75)

The effort to educate professionals, single parents and the general public about paternity issues has only just begun. There are many barriers to paternity establishment, not the least of which are the fear, controversy and ignorance that currently surround the subject. A major effort will be required to change these attitudes and make the establishment of paternity for children of unmarried parents the rule rather than the exception.

The writer has launched a vigorous effort to educate professionals and intends to continue this to the extent that her employment allows. Ten workshops have been presented to various professional groups and others are scheduled. As of December, 1994, three conference proposals have submitted and two were accepted, including one for the National Organization of Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention (NOAPPP) in Washington, D.C. Also, the writer has received a foundation grant proposal for the publication of the booklet on paternity.

The booklet *Paternity Establishment: Information for Professionals* (see Appendix E) will be published and disseminated statewide utilizing the resources available through the nonprofit agency on school-age parenting.

Finally, two casemanagers who worked in the paternity establishment project are receiving credit toward MSW degrees for their participation. In both cases, the project has been approved as a field-based internship.

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APPENDIX A

Intake Survey

PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT
Intake Survey

Agency Name:_____Form Completed by:_____

****

Client Name:_____Age:____ Ethnicity:_____ Date:_____

What does "paternity establishment" mean to you?

Do you plan to establish the paternity of your child?

What are your reasons for wanting (or not wanting) to establish paternity?

What are the benefits when you establish the paternity of your child? (List as many as you can)

For you:

For your child:

For the father:

Do you understand that there are other consequences of establishing paternity? (List)

Do you know what you need to do to complete the process? (Explain it as best you can)

Are you interested in finding out more about paternity establishment? (This includes what the benefits and obligations are for you and the baby's father and what it will mean for your child in the future. It also includes information and assistance in completing the legal process.)

APPENDIX B

Project Assessment

PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT
Project Assessment

Agency:_____Form Completed by:_____Phone:_____

****

Client Name:_____Date:_____

What does the paternity establishment mean to you?

What are the benefits of paternity establishment? (List as many as you can.)

For you:

For your child:

For the father:

What rights will the baby's father have when paternity is established?

What will his obligations be to the child?

What will you need to do (or what did you do) to complete the paternity establishment process?

How long will paternity establishment last?

Did you or will you establish the paternity of your child?

Did the information you received about paternity and the followup discussions help you to make a decision?

APPENDIX C

Paternity Establishment: Final Evaluation

PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT
Final Evaluation

Please respond to the following questions as completely as you can. If you need more space, use the back or another sheet of paper.

1. Please rate the initial inservice training for the project. How could the training be improved?
   Excellent----1-----2-----3----4-----5----Poor

2. Rate the support you received from the project director. If support was not suufficient, what kind of support did you need that was unavailable to you? Excellent-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5----Poor

3. Were the forms developed to track the project useful? What could have been improved, changed or eliminated? Useful-----1-----2-----3----4-----5-----Not useful

4. Did you use the booklets, *Every Child Deserves a Legal Father* and *For Your Child's Sake, Establish paternity*; and the video with your clients?

5. Were the booklets and the video helpful? Can you suggest other materials that might be used?
   Helpful-----1-----2-----3----4-----5-----Not helpful

6. In general, what was your clients' understanding of paternty establishment before you presented the paternity information?

7. In general, what was your clients' level of understanding of paternity establishment following the educational presentation?

8. Overall, what was your clients' response to the information about paternity establishment?

9. In your opinion, what are the major barriers to paternity establishment?

10. In your opinion, how can rates of paternity establishment be increased?

11. What did you learn through participation in this project?

12. Please add any comments that you wish.

APPENDIX D

Project Rollup Form

PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT
Project Rollup Form

Client Name	Age	Race	Agency	Worker	Date Survey	Date Ed.	Number of Follow-ups	Date Assess	Date Pat. Est.	Date Declined

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX F

Consent to Release Information

List of Materials

Paternity Establishment: Information for Arizona Professionals
Janet M. Wise
A publication of the Arizona Council on School-Age Parenting in cooperation with the Pima Youth Partnership (booklet)

Benefits and Obligations of Paternity Establishment
(Workshop handout)

Reasons to Establish Paternity
Barriers to Paternity Establishment
Ideas for increasing Paternity Establishment
(transparencies)

For copies contact:

Janet M. Wise
525 West Cypress
Phoenix, Arizona 85003
(602) 258-5762

APPENDIX E

List of Materials

PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT

Consent to Release Information

I _____ agree to participate in a paternity establishment
Print Name

project by listening to educational information about establishing the paternity of my child. I further agree that information about my responses to this information and my decisions in connection with paternity issues may be released to Janet M. Wise. I understand that I will not be identified by name nor in any other manner that would make personal identification possible in any presentation or publication that may result from this project.

_____
Signature Date

_____
Witness Date

APPENDIX G

Paternity Presentation Outline

PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT: INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

Workshop Outline

What does paternity establishment mean?

Why is it an issue now?

Why should there be concern about so many out-of-wedlock births?

What are the reasons why paternity should be established?

- For the child
- For the mother
- For the father
- For society

Why don't more single parents establish paternity?

Which agencies are responsible for paternity establishment?

- Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE)
- Clerk of the Superior Court
- County Attorney's Offices

What does the procedure involve?

- Voluntary Acknowledgement

  Use of forms
  Notary Services
  Fee waivers

- Genetic/blood testing for disputed or uncertain paternities

What can professionals do to encourage paternity establishment?